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## REACHING OUT TO THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) YOUTH

Recent media scrutiny on school bullying has shed light on the need to focus on suicide prevention efforts for the LGBTQ youth population. This requires engagement of communities and schools as well as families and peers. Fortunately, programs across California provide education, support and services to promote positive change and support for LGBTQ youth.

### WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SUICIDE IN LGBTQ YOUTH

According to the California Department of Public Health, suicide is the second leading cause of fatal injury in youth ages 10-14; the third leading cause of fatal injury in youth ages 15-19; and the second leading cause of death in youth ages 20-24. **In 2008, there were 402 deaths by suicide for young people between the ages of 10 – 24 in California.**

Data on suicides in the LGBTQ youth population is limited by the fact that public health records do not routinely collect data on sexual orientation in self-reported surveys. Data on suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts, however, offers some insight into the problem. According to the 2009 California Health Interview Survey, 16.6% of all adult respondents who identified as LGBTQ reported having serious thoughts of committing suicide at some point in their lives. In comparison, only 8.7% of adult respondents who identified themselves as straight or heterosexual responded in this manner. In 2006, The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that **LGB high school students were more than four times as likely as the state's non-LGB students to have attempted suicide.** Other studies have suggested that **suicide attempts in high school students may be as much as two to seven times higher among those who identify as LGBTQ compared to their heterosexual peers.** Studies have also demonstrated that **LGBTQ youth in rejecting families are nine times more likely to attempt suicide compared to their heterosexual peers.**

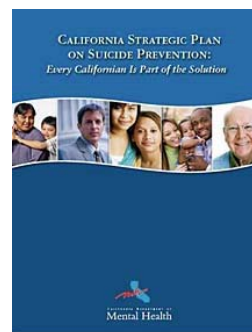
*This data indicates that LGBTQ youth are in need of services and support to promote mental well-being.*

### WHAT CALIFORNIA IS DOING TO HELP



The California Department of Mental Health, [Office of Multicultural Services \(OMS\)](#) is currently implementing the [California Reducing Disparities Project](#) (CRDP), one of the 5 Statewide Projects funded through the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). CRDP has created five population-specific approaches that will form the basis of a statewide comprehensive strategic plan to identify new ways to reduce disparities. The LGBTQ population has been identified as one of the target populations and the [Equality California Institute](#) (ECI) has been charged with developing the LGBTQ Reducing Disparities Strategic Plan. If you are interested in becoming part of ECI's Advisory Group for the CRDP, and help shape California's future for meeting the mental health needs of the LGBTQ population, please review the [ECI's Advisory Group Application](#).

The [California Strategic Plan on Suicide Prevention](#) identified the LGBTQ population as a high-risk population. Using the Plan as a blueprint, several California counties have identified and implemented suicide prevention programs created specifically for the LGBTQ youth population using Prop 63 Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding.





## LOCAL ACHIEVEMENTS

**Tulare County** is implementing The Trevor Project's (TTP) Lifeguard Workshop program and is sharing this program with neighboring **Kings County**. TTP's suicide prevention outreach models engage school administrators, students and community volunteers in educating students, peers and community members about the experiences of LGBTQ youth and how to be supportive; assisting school administrators in identifying potential discriminatory policies and practices; and providing resources for student referrals. For more information, contact [Noah Whitaker](#) (Tulare County) or [David Reynolds](#) (TTP).

**San Francisco Suicide Prevention** is continuing their San Francisco-based LGBTQ outreach efforts by providing local survivor support groups. They will also be starting a new advertising campaign on MUNI buses and trains. For more information, please contact [Eve Meyer](#).

**Santa Clara County** has identified LGBTQ youth as a priority population in their Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention. Recommended strategies for this population include: a) suicide risk assessments for youth, b) teaching resiliency, c) training for those who interact with LGBTQ youth, and d) youth-centered crisis lines. For more information, contact [Elena Tindall](#).



**The Family Acceptance Project (FAP)** is the only community research, intervention, education and policy initiative that works to

decrease major health and related risks for LGBTQ youth, including suicide. Based out of San Francisco State University, the Project uses a research-based, culturally grounded approach to help diverse families decrease rejection and increase support for their LGBTQ children. The team is putting research into practice by developing the first evidence-based family model of wellness, prevention and care to strengthen families and promote positive development and healthy futures for LGBTQ children and youth. For more information, please contact [Caitlyn Ryan](#), the Director of FAP.

## RESOURCES FOR THE LGBTQ YOUTH COMMUNITY & THEIR SUPPORT SYSTEMS

**The Trevor Project** provides suicide prevention services specifically for LGBTQ youth. These services include the 24/7 Crisis Lifeline (**1-866-4-U-TREVOR**) and the [24/7 TrevorChat](#). The Trevor Project has also developed the [Lifeguard Workshops](#) and [Survival Kits](#), which provide outreach, education, and training to students, school administrators and community members.

**Teen Line** (**1-800-852-8336**): Teen Line employs a peer-to-peer model of support, using trained teens to help other teens in distress.

**California Youth Crisis Line** (**1-800-843-5200**): The CYCL is a California statewide, 24/7, toll-free confidential hotline available to teens and young adults or any adults supporting youth.

**It Gets Better Project** allows LGBTQ adults to share their personal stories via YouTube videos, conveying the message to young people that "it does get better."

**Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)** and the **Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA)**: GLSEN work with educators, policymakers, community leaders and students to address anti-LGBTQ behavior and bias in schools. GSAs are student clubs that work to improve the school climate for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Get involved by joining or starting a [local GSA](#).

**Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)** is a national organization dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of LGBTQ persons and their families and friends through education, support and advocacy. Get involved by joining your local [PFLAG Chapter](#).

**Suicide Prevention among LGBTQ Youth – A Workshop for Professionals Who Serve Youth:** Developed by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, this kit provides all materials necessary to host a workshop for schools, youth organizations, and suicide prevention programs to take action to reduce suicidal behavior among LGBTQ youth.



## RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SUICIDE PREVENTION IN LGBTQ YOUTH COMMUNITIES

**Suicide Prevention Resource Center (2008).** [Suicide Risk and Prevention for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth](#). Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.

This paper highlights the higher risk of suicidal behavior among LGBT youth and provides recommendations to reduce this risk through a broad spectrum of methodologies affecting institutional and individual levels and all points in between.

**Kosciw JG, Greytak EA, Diaz EM, and Bartkiewicz MJ (2010).** [The 2009 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools](#). New York: GLSEN.



The 2009 National School Climate Survey examined the experiences of LGBT students with regard to indicators of negative school climates.



**Harris Interactive and GLSEN (2005).** [From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America, A Survey of Students and Teachers](#). New York: GLSEN

This national survey was intended to explore teens' and secondary school teachers' experiences with and attitudes toward school harassment. Topics covered in the survey include frequency of harassment and bullying, exposure to offensive language and personal experiences with harassment at their school.

## MEDIA REPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS

The manner in which suicide is discussed must be considered to ensure that the topic is addressed in a responsible manner. For in-depth instructions on addressing suicide in the media, please refer to these [media guidelines](#). In general, reporters should:

- Emphasize suicide *prevention* and ways the suicide could have been intervened.
- Not report on suicide attempts or sensationalize completed suicides.
- Always list the warning signs of a potentially suicidal individual and list the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (**1-800-273-TALK**) as a resource.

## OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS & BREAKING NEWS

The [National Alliance on Suicide Prevention](#) unveiled their new website, which will provide information and updates on the work of the Action Alliance's Executive Committee, and the Task Forces that are charged with strengthening the Nation's suicide prevention infrastructure.

The [California Mental Health Services Authority](#) (CalMHSA) has released Request for Proposals for three Mental Health Services Act-funded California Statewide Projects – Suicide Prevention, Stigma & Discrimination Reduction and the Student Mental Health Initiative. These projects are poised to transform the way suicide prevention and mental illness are perceived and supported across California. Visit the CalMHSA website to learn more.

## RECENT RESEARCH FINDINGS

**Larkin LG, Rivera H, et al., (2011).** [Community Responses to a Suicidal Crisis: Implications for Suicide Prevention](#). *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*. 41(1): 79-86.

This study gathered information on how the public would hypothetically respond if someone they knew was suicidal. Responses varied by a variety of demographic characteristics.

**Luxton DD, June JD & Kinn JT (2011).** [Technology-Based Suicide Prevention – Current Applications and Future Directions](#). *Telemedicine and e-Health*. 17(1): 50-54

This article describes innovative applications such as virtual worlds, gaming and text analysis that are currently being developed and applied to suicide prevention and outreach programs. Benefits and limitations of these applications are discussed as well as future directions for use.

**Haas AP, Eliason M, et al. (2011).** [Suicide and Suicide Risk in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Populations: Review and Recommendations](#). *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58:10-51

This article summarizes existing research findings on LGBT suicides, and makes recommendations for addressing knowledge gaps and applying current knowledge to relevant areas of suicide prevention practice.